

The official publication of the NC State Grange

January/February 2015

GRANGE NEWS



HOLLY GROVE FARMS
NC STATE GRANGE FARM OF THE YEAR



November

2016 Calendar Photo Contest!

Mark Davis, the NC State Grange Insurance Coordinator, is hosting a 2016 calendar photo contest this spring. Calendars will be distributed to insurance agents and Granges across North Carolina.

Only one entry per person. Entrant must be an NC Grange member in good standing. Only 15 entries per season allowed. Once 15 are entered for a particular season, the season will be removed. Entry MUST be of a farm or landscape scene with an obvious season (winter, spring, summer, fall).

All entries will be judged online and by the Family Conference attendees by monetary "votes". The 12 photographs with the most votes (3 per season) will be printed with the artist and Grange in a 2016 calendar.

All money collected from the votes will be split 50/50 among the 12 winners and the Beach Food Pantry in Nags Head, NC.

SUBMIT BY MARCH 1ST AT NCGRANGE.COM

VOTE MARCH 2-22 AT NCGRANGE.COM

STOCK THE PANTRY!

At Family Conference we will collect canned food items for the Beach Food Pantry in Nags Head, NC. Not attending? Send your food with someone who is!

The Grange with the most items donated will win a prize!

VISIT NCGRANGE.COM FOR A LIST OF ITEMS NEEDED!



State Officers

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Vice President	Ned Hudson
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Assistant Steward	Valentin DeLeon
Lady Asst. Steward	Crystal Allen
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Ceres	Dianne Hudson
Pomona	Frances Suther
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Youth Director	Jennie Gentry
Junior Director	Emily Hartsell
Community Service Director	Jessica Horton
Publications Director	Jessica Horton

FEBRUARY

13-15 Winter Youth
Conference
Asheboro, NC

MARCH

18 Ag Awareness Day
Raleigh, NC
20-22 Family Conference
Nags Head, NC

APRIL

Grange Month!
New Scholarship
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Around the Grange

Pictured on the cover: Debbie Craig and sons, Jesse & Shane



When Danny Thomas was living he said “There are two kinds of people in the world – givers and takers. The takers may eat better, but the givers sleep better.” This is a great quote because it reminds all of us about how we should live our lives. I like to think

that Grange members are givers through the opportunities that are found in our individual communities for service. We are charitable in nature and our desire is to help others and make our communities better. Granges across our state are graciously giving to their communities each year. Local Granges are supporting schools, helping those in need, volunteering, supporting other groups, financially supporting youth to attend camp, conducting dance classes, conducting exercise classes, hosting candidate forums, and the list goes on. Every community has needs, and every Grange has an opportunity to identify those needs and play a role in making things better. Community service is so important that the State Grange has a grant program in place to assist local and Pomona Granges with projects. Granges may apply for an amount up to \$5000.00 to assist with qualified projects. Over the years, we have had several Granges to use this grant program for as-

sistance. The program is designed to assist with expenses associated with community service projects in which Grange members are actively involved. Application forms are available at the State Grange office. A smaller grant program is also available to assist Granges with inadequate financial resources to help fund projects such as: the dictionary project, to pay speaker honorariums, to buy postage, or help pay for refreshments or part of a meal. Granges may apply for a one-time grant of up to \$500.00 to fund these needs. As part of the application, the Grange will need to state what the grant funds would be used for along with a financial statement from the Grange to demonstrate financial need. Let's make 2015 a year of great community service projects within all of our Granges. Let's be givers of our time, talent, and resources to help make our organization and our communities stronger.

Atlantic Coast Pipeline Planned

In September, an announcement was made regarding a joint venture between Dominion Resources of Virginia, Duke Energy, Piedmont Natural Gas, and AGL Resources of Atlanta to construct a 550 mile natural gas pipeline through West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina. According to the partners, this pipeline will be good for the economy as well as the environment of these states. It could lead to more jobs and lower prices for homes and businesses. The initiative is projected to cost approximately \$5 billion.

Not everyone agrees that the pipeline will be a positive addition. There is opposition from groups and individuals because of environmental concerns. The partners have encountered a problem in Virginia where approximately 180 landowners are refusing to allow surveys to take place on their land, citing concerns about possible leaks and spills.

In North Carolina, the pipeline is planned to be built through the following counties: Northhampton, Halifax, Nash, Wilson, Johnston, Sampson, Cumber-

land, and Robeson. On February 6-8, 2014, open houses were conducted in Fayetteville, Smithfield, and Jackson, North Carolina to begin discussions with the public.

The NC State Grange has no specific policy on whether or not this pipeline should be built, but we do have policy that could support this project. For example, we have policy advocating that we become a self-sufficient energy nation, and keeping electricity affordable. We also believe that agricultural productivity is highly dependent upon the avail-

ability of energy to farms, transportation, and agribusiness, and it should be a high priority. On the other hand, we would want to know the impact that the pipeline could have on agricultural productivity. Will good farmland be taken out of production? What are the true environmental risks? How will property rights be affected?

In a nutshell, we will need more information before making a policy decision on whether or not to support this project. We will continue to monitor and learn more in the months ahead.

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The Grange is a grassroots, community service, family organization with a special interest in agriculture and designed to help meet the needs of people, young and old, through a cooperative effort with government and other organizations that also seek the greatest good for the greatest number.

Susan Albright, Troutman Grange

Candy/Dralines

- 1 1/2 Cups toasted pecans
- 1 1/2 Cups white sugar
- 3/8 Cup butter
- 3/4 Cup brown sugar
- 1/2 Cup milk
- 1 Teaspoon vanilla extract

Line baking sheet with aluminum foil. In a large saucepan over medium heat, combine pecans, sugar, butter, brown sugar, milk and vanilla. Heat to between 234-240 degrees (112 to 116 degrees Celcius) with a candy thermometer or until small amount of syrup dropped into cold water forms a soft ball that flattens when removed from the water and placed on a flat surface. Drop by spoonfuls onto a prepared baking sheet. Let cool completely.

Evelyn Duncan, Bushy Fork Grange

Peanut Butter Bars

- 3 Cups Rice Krispies
- 1 Cup peanut butter
- 12 Ounces white baking chips
- 1 Cup party peanuts

Melt peanut butter and baking chips, mix with Rice Krispies and peanut butter. Pour into a 9x12 pan. Cool and cut into bars.

Jessica Horton, Queen City Grange

Apple Cake

- 2 1/2 Cups all-purpose flour
- 3 Teaspoons baking powder
- 1 1/4 Cups sugar
- 3/4 Cup butter, softened
- 1 Teaspoon vanilla
- 3 Eggs
- 1/2 Cup milk
- 1 Can apple pie filling
- 1/2 Cup apple juice

Frosting:

- 1 Package cream cheese
- 2 Teaspoons cinnamon
- 4 Cups powdered sugar

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease muffin pan or line with greased muffin cups. Cream butter, sugar and salt together. Combine flour and baking powder separate and then add to creamed mixture. Fold in apple pie filling, milk and juice. Bake 27-35 minutes

For frosting, combine ingredients and pipe on to cooled cupcakes.

2nd Place Adult Apple Cake

Linda Albright, Patterson Grange

Blueberry Nut Round Cake

- 2 1/2 Sticks butter
- 5 Eggs
- 3 1/2 Cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Cup buttermilk
- 2 Cups blueberries
- 3 Cups sugar
- 1 Teaspoon lemon juice
- 1 Package lemon instant pudding
- 1-2 Cups chopped walnuts
- 1/2 Teaspoon baking soda

Cream butter and sugar until fluffy. Add eggs one at a time, beating well. Beat in lemon pudding mix and lemon juice. Add flour alternately with buttermilk, then add in baking soda. Mix all well, then fold in walnuts and blueberries. Bake for 1 hour and 30 minutes at 325 degrees.

Frosting: Mix 8 Ounces of cream cheese, 1 stick of butter, 1 Tablespoon lemon juice and enough powdered sugar for correct consistency.

2nd Place Adult Berry Cake

Sharon Ritchie, St. John's Grange

Pecan Raisin Apple Cookies

- 1/4 Cup butter, softened
- 1 Cup packed brown sugar
- 2 Eggs
- 1/4 Cup unsweetened apple juice
- 1/4 Teaspoon lemon extract
- 1 1/2 Cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Cup quick cooking oats
- 1 Teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3/4 Teaspoon baking soda
- 3/4 Teaspoon salt
- 1/4 Teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/8 Teaspoon cloves
- 1 1/2 Cups chopped, peeled apples
- 1 Cup raisins
- 1/2 Cup chopped pecans

In a large bowl, cream butter and brown sugar until crumbly, about 2 minutes. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each. Add apple juice and lemon extract. In a separate bowl combine flour, oats, cinnamon, baking soda, salt, nutmeg and cloves. Gradually add the dry mixture to the wet mixture and mix well. Stir in the apples, raisins and nuts. Drop by rounded Tablespoon 2 inches apart onto ungreased baking sheets. Bake at 350 degrees for 11-13 minutes or until lightly browned.

1st Place Adult Apple Cookie

Cape Fear Grange Provides Support to Ferguson Easley Elementary

From Ken Plummer

As a part of the Cape Fear Grange outreach program, the Grange has an ongoing relationship with Ferguson Easley Elementary, which is located in a low income area of our community. The NC State Grange has provided winter coats, underwear, health care kits (toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, etc.), and food supplies for backpack buddies so the school could distribute them to children in need. During meetings with the school administration, they indicated that they would like to upgrade their courtyard to make it a more inviting environment for students and staff. An initial plan was developed, and a grant request in the amount of \$5,000 was submitted to the NC Grange. The grant was approved, and after substantial planning and material acquisition, efforts led by Steve Runkle, Mitch Guy, and the support of the school district maintenance organization, the upgrade of the courtyard was completed on January 10, 2015. The primary upgrade was the installation of a storm drain, grading the courtyard, and installation of pavers to provide proper drainage, beautify and simplify the care of the area. New park benches, and upgraded light fixtures have been provided, and additional landscaping will be completed in the near future. The reaction of Ferguson Easley Principal Mary Hales, Ed. D. says it all "OH, MY GOODNESS!! What an amazing sight to behold!! I am in awe!!" There aren't enough words to express how grateful and appreciative I am of this amazing recreation of our courtyard". Cape Fear Grange appreciates the support of the NC State Grange for funding this worthwhile effort, and look forward to continuing the efforts of the Cape Fear Grange to support this school.



Top: Finished Ferguson Easley Elementary Courtyard
Middle: Members install benches after pavers
Bottom: Members prepare for sand bed for paver installation

In Memoriam

*You light a lamp for me. The Lord, my
God, lights up my darkness.
Psalm 118:28*

** 50 Year Member*

Mr. Stanley Boyd
Mr. Billy Tart, Sr.
Ms. Ruth Ellis

Associate member
Grantham Grange
Brogden Grange

Ms. Amelia Shepherd*
Mr. Hugh Jernigan*
Mr. Junior Lee Hobson
Mr. Carlton Blalock
Mr. John A. Walker*
Mr. Peter Kramer
Ms. Lula Mae Landreth
Ms. Estelle Rose Sloan
Mr. Marwin Alligood

Ferguson Grange
Guilford Grange
Associate Member
Associate Member
St. John's Grange
Schley Grange
Associate Member
Brogden Grange
Beaufort County Grange



HOLLY GROVE FARMS

~HOME OF 1,000 GOATS~
NO “KIDDIN”!

STORY BY: LAURIE PAYNE
PHOTOS BY: JESSICA HORTON

It all started when Ron Craig won a piglet in a “pig scramble” when he was growing up. This gilt (which I later found out is a young female pig used for breeding, that is put up for sale that has not yet produced piglets) was what triggered his love for animal agriculture. And so the story goes...

Three generations of the Craig family have now been involved with breeding goats, milking goats, and making goat cheese at Holly Grove Farms. Founded by the late Ron Craig and his wife Debbie, Holly Grove Farms is located in the rural Grantham community near Goldsboro and Mount Olive, NC. When Debbie’s husband passed away in 2009, Holly Grove Farms became one of only a few woman-owned, family-run goat farms and goat creameries in the United States. With the help of her two sons that work more than full time, two daughters that help out between their full time jobs as well as her grandchildren, Debbie has taken the heritage and dream that Ron had into a reality. Now Holly Grove Farms has become one of the largest farmsteads and woman-owned goat dairies in the United States. Holly Grove Farms breeds and raises over 1,000 milking goats and makes the chevre (goat cheese) from their milk on the farm. The fresh milk is pumped from one room to another. It is never trucked from another location. Using this method, they are able to manage every second of the process that goes into making the

chevre which is then sold to specialty grocery stores such as Earth Fare and Weaver Street Market in Orange County which has three locations, as well as local restaurants in the surrounding area. They also have a small retail store on their farm where you can purchase their amazingly delicious and creamy chevre. Debbie was gracious enough to give us samples of all the flavors they make including southwest blend, strawberry and basil just to name a few. Last year Holly Grove Farms produced 175,000 pounds of cheese and with the popularity of chevre growing, Debbie is hoping they can continue to grow as long as they can keep up with the demand. Chevre production has increased domestically in quantity and quality thanks to the integrity and hard work of farms like Holly Grove Farms.

Honestly, goats have always intrigued me but when Jessica Horton and I visited Holly Grove Farms nothing could have prepared me for the sight of that beautiful 60 acre farm that was the home of over 1,000 goats. Their herd consists of Alpines, Saanens and Toggenburgs. The goats are separated by age. The mature goats are milked twice a day, at 6:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Each goat produces approximately three-quarters of a gallon of milk a day which translates into one pound of cheese and a huge amount of discipline and hard work.

As we walked around the farm, it became apparent that each goat had their own distinctive personality. Goats are genuinely curious about everything around them. We observed them as they trotted up to their milking stations where they are simultaneously fed. Debbie said, “Now don’t let them see you, or they will stop, look and hold up the process”. Cute as cute can be—I could have put one or two in my car and taken them home to live with me!

During the day the female goats graze on the farm, scale hay bales and feed bins. The younger goats are kept in an enclosed area for safety. “Loafing barns” are for shelter during harsher weather. Holly Grove Farms is as clean and pristine as any farm could ever hope to be. I was fascinated with the Akbash which is the breed of work dogs that live with the goats to protect them from coyotes and other predators. Their white coat blends them

perfectly with the goats as they snuggle down with them in their loafing barns. They instantly were on guard when I walked near the goats alerting me to stay away. Holly Grove Farms has had no incidents with coyotes since the Askbash have come to work there. Askbash are kind and gentle creatures but are bred to work and protect—“they are not pets” as I quickly learned.

“We don’t do this for the money - it’s a life, and that’s the whole point”

In addition to breeding and raising goats, and producing chevre (as if this is not enough) Holly Grove Farms also farms hogs, beef cattle and grows 300 acres of hay. This obviously keeps their farm diversified which is imperative to successful farming. As with any farming operation, Holly Grove Farms has tremendous challenges. Last winter the hog farm suffered from PED (Porcine epidemic diarrhea) which struck quite a few hog

farms in North Carolina. They have to constantly be on the lookout for parasites with their goats which can be a problem and there’s always the ever constant weather. As Debbie told us one of our biggest challenges is “getting around to everything”. There is always, always, always something to do. As with any family business the Craig’s try to keep their time together socially peaceful.

The North Carolina State Grange was very proud to recognize Holly Grove Farms as their “Family Farm of the Year” for 2014. As Debbie and both her sons so eloquently told us, “We don’t do this for the money-it’s a life, and that’s the whole point”. Well said Holly Grove Farms-you are a great example for all of us!

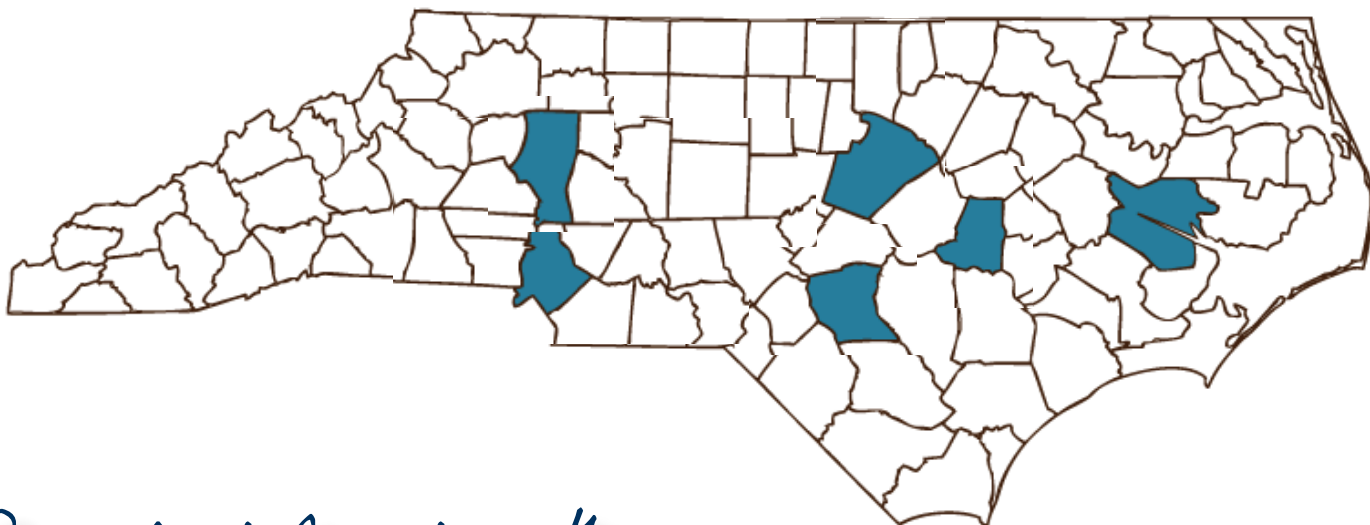
Learn more at www.hollygrovecheese.com



To learn how your Grange can nominate a farm for the 2015 award visit www.ncgrange.com and click ‘2015 Program Guide’ under the News section.



Jesse Craig



Beaufort County Grange

From Debra Cayton

The Beaufort County Grange honored their past Presidents in a program in 2014. During the program, past President Bennie Alligood's family received his past President's pin and expressed their deep appreciation to the Grange and shared their remembrances of the family's commitment to the Grange principles which had enriched their lives.

Also, past President, Edward Ray Edwards was presented his past President's pin with deep appreciation from the membership for his leadership and vision which helped build the strong organization of the Beaufort County Grange.

The program continued with a review of the history of the local Grange and remembrances of the hard work of each member. Sharing stories of the different fund raising projections and the building program of the Grange helped all members to share the celebration of the past. The meeting concluded with a look to the future and a commitment to build on the hard work of the past. The celebration included the news that Beaufort County Grange is the largest Grange in North Carolina!



Troutman Grange

From Gay Shaver:

Troutman Grange #1292 held their first awards banquet at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Troutman, North Carolina. Awards were given to all of their community service nominees.

Troutman Fire and Rescue received their North Carolina State Grange certificate for Rescue Squad of the Year, as did Holy Trinity Lutheran Church for Church of the Year (membership 101-249), and Kelly Clontz as Rescue Personnel of the Year. Persons representing Troutman Fire and Rescue were Captain Tom Billing, Frank Cline, Dean Swaim, Gordon Troutman and Kelly Clontz. Persons representing Holy Trinity Lutheran Church were Pastor Dieter Punt, Joyce McGuire, Lee Carpenter and Terri Troutman, all members of the church council.

All Troutman Grange members that won awards in crafts, photography or baking were recognized and received a certificate. There were 43 individual awards presented. North Carolina State Grange President, Jimmy Gentry presented the awards. Special recognition was given to Margie Griffin, NC State Youth of the Year and Alexis Cash, NC State Junior of the Year by Anita Gentry.

Cape Fear Grange

From Allison Guenther

During 2013's National Convention, Wade and Kim Fowler took a tour of the Idea Fair held one afternoon. Among the many ideas offered for local Granges to replicate, a booth focused on robotics caught their eye. Earlier in the year Herman Dudley of Great Oak Youth Development Center visited the Grange to share about their organization's mission to provide a foundation for achievement and success among male youth ages 6-18 years old. In particular, he shared their Great Oak Robotics Camp focused on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), valuable problem solving methods, building engineering concepts and computer skills, and gaining an appreciation for friendly competition. Cape Fear voted to secure \$750 in funding to provide three Lego robotics kits to Great Oak. In August 2014, the boys used the robotics kit during their Robotics Camp and plan on recycling and using them again. In learning about the needs of their community, harnessing the ideas offered at the National Grange Idea Fair, and mobilizing the local Grange into action has created a wonderful partnership between the two non-profits and in turn is creating opportunities for at-risk youth that will leave a lasting impact.

Joyce Clodfelter will be collecting the Box Tops and soup labels this year. She asks you send them on a quarterly basis if possible (April, July, October & January) for counting purposes. She would love to see more participation in this program!

Address: Joyce Clodfelter 150 PG Farm Drive, Statesville, NC 28677



CARDS FOR ST. JUDE'S!

From Joyce Clodfelter, NC Grange Family Living Director

The North Carolina State Grange is going to be collecting old Christmas cards and all occasion (front only) which will be sent to the St. Jude's Children's Hospital. This will be a project that we will complete at State Convention in September, but please bring any old cards to Family Conference in March and I will collect them from you. Just keep collecting through out the year and we should have lots by September!

Hope you find this to be a worthwhile project for the Children at St. Jude's.

Capitol Grange

From Jeff Barnhart

The Capitol Grangers celebrated the holidays together this year at the home of Laurie Payne. The theme was "It's got to be an NC Agriculture Christmas". Laurie fixed pork tenderloin with rolls and asparagus accompanied by a blue cheese spread as well as a horseradish sauce. Grangers added to the fare with delicious homemade sausage balls, Dewey's sugar cake made in Winston Salem, pecan pie, a variety of dips and topped off with homemade peppermint ice cream and chocolate syrup from Lewis' Farms located in Pender County, North Carolina. It was fun to celebrate all the wonderful food that North Carolina farms produce.

Laurie also invited some friends and neighbors that assisted with the judging of contests for our annual meeting in September. It was a great way to thank them for their service to the Grange. It was a joyous occasion and a tradition that Laurie hopes to carry forward. "I grew up in a farming community with a Mother that loved Christmas more than anyone I have ever known. She would sometimes host three parties during a Christmas season. They were not necessarily fancy, but the food was always delicious and I absolutely loved it. She would smile knowing I was carrying on her traditions, and I cannot think of a better way to do it than with our Grangers." All of the gifts for the family that the Capitol Grange adopted through the Episcopal Housing Ministry in Raleigh were displayed in the dining room as a reminder of how important community service is to the Grange and what the Christmas season is truly all about.



Queen City Grange

Queen City Grange sponsored two local children (one boys and one girl) for Christmas this year. Four members were able to put aside busy holiday schedules and spend an evening having dinner and shopping.

Each child received clothing items, including two complete outfits with shoes, undergarments, as well as a new toothbrush and toothpaste. They also received "wish list" items that included soccer items for him and musical items for her.



Grantham Grange

From Joyce Hood

Come and "Meet the Candidates", sponsored by Grantham Grange #968 was held Monday, October 13, 2014 at the Grantham Fire Department. Grange members, members of the community and candidates started forming around 6:00 PM with heavy hors d'oeuvres being served at 6:30 PM, after which each candidate was given 3 minutes to speak. There were 14 candidates present and four had representatives speak for them. After each candidate spoke there was an opportunity for guests to speak to them one-on-one.

Candidates on the local, county and state levels were present including Board of Education, Sheriff, Board of Commissioners, NC General Assembly, District Court Judges and Judges on the Court of Appeals. Other candidates that are running unopposed were also in attendance.

Approximately 100 people attended the event. Bobby Crawford, President of Grantham Grange, said the big reason for having a "Meet the Candidates" is to give the people in our community a chance to hear what each candidate's platform is before they go to the polls to vote. (pictured right)

Please save the date! Wednesday, March 18th

Commissioner of North Carolina Agriculture, Steve Troxler, has committed this day~March 18th~to agriculture at the North Carolina General Assembly. The North Carolina State Grange along with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and many of our North Carolina commodities will visit the General Assembly that day to educate our legislators as well as the public about agriculture and the tremendous role that it plays in the North Carolina economy and the jobs market. The theme for this event will be "Come Grow with Us". It is important that the Grange has a strong showing of members from all over our state. It will also be a great time to foster interest and enthusiasm for Grange membership. If you are involved with any of our agriculture commodities, please encourage them to participate. Please make plans to attend that day. I will advise you of the details as the date gets closer and please feel free to call or email if you have questions. It would be a great time to reach out to your House Representative or Senator about any issues that are of concern to you and your community.

January 14th was the first day of the 2015 long session of the North Carolina General Assembly. This first day of session solely convened for the appointment of leaders and committee chairs. As we know, Republicans hold a 34-16 majority in the Senate and in the House, Republicans hold a 74-46 majority. January 28th will be the next scheduled day of session. The new leadership slated for the 2015-16 session is as follows:

NC HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Speaker of the House: Rep. Tim Moore
(Cleveland Co.)

Speaker Pro Tem: Rep. Skip Stam (Wake Co.)

Majority Leader: Rep. Mike Hager
(Rutherford Co.)

Deputy Majority Leader: Rep. Marilyn Avila
(Wake Co.)

Majority Whip: Rep. John Bell (Wayne Co.)

Conference Chair: Rep. Charles Jeter
(Mecklenburg Co.)

Joint Caucus Chair: Rep. Pat Hurley
(Randolph Co.)

Freshman Leader: John Fraley (Iredell Co.)

Freshman Whip: John Bradford
(Mecklenburg Co.)

Minority Leader: Rep. Larry Hall
(Durham Co.)

NC SENATE

President Pro Temp: Sen. Phil Berger
(Rockingham Co.)

Deputy President Pro Temp: Sen. Louis Pate
(Wayne Co.)

Majority Leader: Sen. Harry Brown
(Onslow Co.)

Majority Whip: Sen. Jerry Tillman
(Randolph Co.)

Caucus Secretary: Sen. Fletcher Hartsell
(Cabarrus Co.)

On the agenda during this 2015 long session will be Medicaid reform, consideration of a \$1 billion highway bond and dealing with a projection of a \$190 million revenue shortfall.

Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, feels that "the most important thing we can do is to enact policies that will protect the jobs we have and bring more jobs to North Carolina." This will more than likely include tweaking the tax reform law passed in 2013 as well as looking at further regulatory reform.

As the fiscal year progresses, Rep. Nelson Dollar, a representative from Wake County and senior chair of the House Appropriations Committee, said the \$190 million budget gap could change as the fiscal year progresses. "We still have sales tax numbers that need to come in for the holiday season to see where we are," Dollar said. "And refund numbers on the income tax side will be working in through February, March, and April." Rep. Dollar feels that 2015 income tax refunds could be less due to efforts made to make withholdings more accurate. "As we move into April 15 and we have a better handle on the numbers, I think that we will see that we will be within tolerable ranges where we can make adjustments," Dollar said.

Medicaid Reform

The General Assembly is expected to take up Medicaid Reform again this session. The Senate prefers a commercial managed care model while the House seems to favor a provider led model of managed care for Medicaid patients. In managed care, the Managed Care Organizations (MCO) is paid a set amount of money per month for each person enrolled for care and they manage all care for that amount of money. Currently in North Carolina, Medicaid services are provided under a fee-for-service model whereby Medicaid is billed directly by the provider for whatever services are rendered. The Senate also wants to pull Medicaid out from under the Department of Health & Human Services and place its management under a standalone entity reporting to an appointed board. Speaker Moore was quoted as saying, "Ultimately, all of the proposals have the same goal, which is to ensure the delivery of the health care services to the population while at the same time doing so efficiently and eliminating the fraud and abuse that tends to be present in the system."

Transportation Bond

During December, Governor McCrory announced a \$1 billion dollar bond referendum for North Carolina's new Highway plan. Because

of the unmet transportation needs in urban and rural areas, Speaker Nominee Moore feels this is an important issue siting if rural transportation is improved it would ease problems in urban areas.

As with most legislative sessions, the issues will ebb and flow, get heated and cool down and hopefully at the end of the day problems will be resolved and progress will be made. Regardless, 2015 is slated to be a busy and hopefully productive year.

News from Capitol Hill

The New Congress Begins

Burton Eller; Legislative Director
National Grange

Congress arrived back in Washington the first week of January for the First Session of the 114th Congress. Newly elected Senators (Sen. Tom Tillis from NC) and Representatives (Congressman David Rouzer, Patrick McHenry, Mark Walker and Congresswoman Alma Adams) were sworn in, seated on committees, found their assigned desk (Senate) or seat (House) on the Senate or House floor in the Capitol Building and began their trek to become Washington "insiders". Both sides of Capitol Hill are now controlled by Republican majorities for 2015-2016, 54-46 in the Senate and 247-188 in the House. This greatly increases the likelihood that more bills will pass both chambers and be sent to the President. It also increases the likelihood that the President will keep his veto pen handy. During the recent 113th Congress with Democrats controlling the Senate and Republicans controlling the House and neither party willing to compromise, bills seldom reached the President's desk to be signed into law or to be vetoed.

The 114th Congress is the most diverse in history. A record number of 104 female lawmakers will serve with 46 black lawmakers, 33 Hispanic lawmakers, twelve Asian-American lawmakers and two of Native American ancestry. The vast majority are Protestant or Catholic, along with 16 Mormons, 28 Jewish-Americans, two Buddhists, two Muslims and one Hindu. Professionally, lawyers lead the pack at 184; 27 have healthcare backgrounds, 13 come from agriculture and three are former aviators including the first female pilot to fly in combat. Many have served in other public service positions: 10 have been governors, 32 were mayors and 251 served in state legislatures.

Major Issues on the Agenda

Cuba

Last month, the President called for ending the embargo on Cuba and announced a series of executive actions to increase trade that would allow Cuba, with an abysmal credit record, to pay for agricultural commodities through a third-country bank. Several U.S. agricultural, cooperative and agribusiness groups have formed the U.S. Agriculture Coalition for Cuba to support the initiative. There remains strong resistance in Congress to ending the embargo. Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ), the son of Cuban immigrants and outgoing chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is critical of the “secret diplomacy” negotiations that gave up things the Castro regime wanted without securing assurances for human rights and political dissidence there. Establishing diplomatic relations right now will be difficult.

Keystone Pipeline

The oil pipeline’s first three construction phases from Canada to the Gulf are practically complete. Current controversy centers on phase four known as Keystone XL which is proposed to connect Hardisty, Alberta to Steele City, Nebraska with a 36 inch pipe transporting up to 830,000 barrels of crude per day from Canada, Montana and North Dakota to refineries in Illinois and Texas. This final phase has generated controversy because of routing over the Ogallala Aquifer in Nebraska and complaints from landowners of eminent domain abuse. The President has threatened veto of legislation approving XL.

Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)

After five years, major components of the law are being worked out for the first time. Persons who do not have health care insurance by February 15 face a fine of \$325 or two percent of family income, whichever is higher. Businesses with at least 100 employees will be forced to offer insurance in 2015 and companies with 50-100 employees must follow suit in 2016. Family doctors who treat Medicaid patients will see reimbursements drop 43% starting now causing some doctors to turn away patients. More than 270,000 doctors and 200 hospitals are experiencing funding cuts for failing to meet new government mandates for electronic medical records. The stakes are high in 2015. While chances of repeal are slim, expect Congress to attempt substantial changes to the Affordable Care Act.

Food

The 114th Congress will deal with more than the food on their plates. A thorough review of school lunch requirements under the 2010 Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act will be a high priority. In implementing this Act, the USDA required schools to serve more vegetables, fruits and whole grains with much less fat, salt and sweeteners. The unintended consequences coming to light now are huge increases in plate waste, reductions in students’ usage of cafeteria services and operating losses on food operations for school districts. School cafeteria professionals are asking for more flexibility. The government issues dietary guidelines every five years to encourage Americans to eat healthier. These guidelines are routinely integrated into school lunch meal patterns and other federal feeding programs. This year’s version may include what’s supposedly healthy for the environment as well. An advisory panel to USDA and Health and Human Services is expected to recommend “compatibility and overlap” between what’s good for health and good for the environment. Introducing undefined “sustainability” into nutrition guidance by the federal government raises scientific and policy issues for Congress oversight.

Food labeling will be on the agenda for several Congressional committees. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will have to defend its new rule requiring calorie labeling at chain restaurants, grocery stores, convenience stores and theaters. The Genetically Modified Organism

(GMO) labeling debate will certainly continue. Following Vermont’s passage of mandatory GMO labeling requirements and several close votes on state ballot initiatives, several Democrat and Republican members of the House are considering legislation would prevent states from setting their own standards while reiterating FDA’s authority over food labeling. At the same time, public policy gurus are asking that instead of demanding foods be labeled as possibly containing GMOs, why are activists not asking for labels on foods that can be certified not contain GMO ingredients?

Trade

Trade agreements may be the most promising area of cooperation between the President and both Republicans and Democrats on the Hill. Washington has not been able to agree on a major bipartisan trade agreement in the last 20 years. Fast-track Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) all have a shot of moving in 2015. The U.S. food production chain from producers to agribusiness to processors and manufacturers are mostly quite supportive trade pacts that give the American business a fair opportunity to buy and sell abroad.

Tax Reform

Tax reform has bipartisan support around the idea that existing tax laws need major reform. How those reforms will take place, though, is another question. Can Republicans, Democrats and the White House agree in some of the most controversial areas needing major reform? Three specific tax provisions will likely get the most attention over the next couple years.

Corporate Tax Rates.

Republican leaders and President Obama both support reducing the current top tax rate of 35%, which is the highest among nations with the world’s largest economies, to the 25-28% range. The devil will be in the details and the specific ways to keep the various proposals overall impact revenue –neutral could become major sticking points.

International Taxes.

Tax treatment of multinational corporations has become a huge issue. Major multinational U.S. corporations are using tax-motivated strategies to shift their tax homes, and therefore their taxes on profits, to more favorable foreign jurisdictions. Any tax reform package will likely seek long term solutions to this loop hole.

Individual Income Taxes.

The Republican Congress wants to restore the lower individual tax rates that expired at the end of 2012. Yet the general population appears to be sharply divided on whether tax hikes or cuts make better economic policy at this time. The last major comprehensive tax reform compromise back in 1986 used a combination of lower rates and reduced tax breaks to spur both sides to the bargaining table.

Gas Taxes.

Congress may be open to negotiating a gas tax increase in order to pay for the highway infrastructure bill that expires in May.

Immigration

Immigration activists on all sides will be pushing Congress to legislate comprehensive immigration reform. Last month, a federal judge in Pennsylvania ruled parts of President Obama’s immigration executive actions violated the separation of powers provided for in the Constitution. Several more legal challenges, including one by two-dozen states, are pending before federal courts.

STATE GRANGE HONORS REPRESENTATIVE HOWARD COBLE

On December 4, a group of Grange members met with Representative Howard Coble to recognize him upon his retirement from the US Congress at his regional office in Greensboro. He was first elected to the US House of Representatives in 1984, and he made the decision to finish his current term of office without running again. Rep. Coble is well-respected in Washington, DC and North Carolina, gaining this respect through his years as an exemplary public servant.

He is a native of Greensboro where he practiced law for part of his career. In addition, he served in the NC House of Representatives and four years as Secretary of the NC Department of Revenue. While in the US House he served on the Judiciary Committee, Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, Aviation Subcommittee, Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, Highways & Transit Subcommittee, and the Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet Subcommittee.

Rep. Coble has been active in his community serving in the Greensboro Bar Association, the Guilford College Board of Visitors, the US Coast Guard Academy Board of Visitors, the American Legion, Lions Club, Greensboro Scottish Rite, as well as the Grange. He is a member of Alamance Presbyterian Church. Participants in the recognition ceremony were Grange members from Guilford, Summerfield, and Gate City Granges, as well as State Office staff. An award was presented to Rep. Coble by Laurie Payne, Legislative Director for the State Grange. Comments were also offered by Robert Caldwell, past President of the NC Stage Grange and Jimmy Gentry, current President.



Left: Bob Johnson from Guilford Grange with Congressman Coble



Right: Laurie Payne, NC State Grange Legislative Director presents Congressman Coble with his award

Save me (Fill in the Blank)!

Josh Barfield, NC State Grange Chaplain

This month marks the season of Epiphany for the Church, a time when we celebrate the manifestation of God in Jesus with visit by the three wise men, Jesus' baptism, and the calling of the Disciples. This is a time when who Jesus is is made known, but only because the three wise men came searching, asking, as our Bible notes, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?"

I think this is a question we all ask from time to time. Where is Jesus? When we are down and hurting, we ask "where is Jesus?". When we are sitting on our couch and listening to the horrible news that blankets the TV each and every day, we ask, "where is Jesus?" When we visit the hospital or visit a loved one who has went through significant loss, we ask ourselves, "where is Jesus?" Where is the guy? Is he here? Is he down the road at another church? Is he in our hearts? Is he at that communion table?

What I have found more often than not, however hard the search, many people think they have found Jesus, or at least some form of Jesus.

There is this great episode of the Simpsons, called "Missionary Impossible," where Homer Simpson gets conned into being a missionary after he learns that the PBS needs \$10,000 or they will have to cancel Homer's favorite show. Homer is so desperate for his show to come back on, he drives down to the PBS telethon and pledges to donate 10,000 dollars. Homer is applauded for saving the network, but it quickly becomes apparent that he does not have the money, prompting pledge drive host Betty White and a mob of characters and personalities from various PBS shows (including Fred Rogers, the Teletubbies, Big Bird, Oscar the Grouch and Elmo) to chase him through the streets asking for his head! Fortunately, the local Reverend Lovejoy saves Homer after he runs into the church, hiding him from the angry mob in a bag disguised as a sack of children's letters to God. Consequently, Lovejoy forgets Homer is in the bag and puts it on a cargo plane to the South Pacific for missionaries to distribute in "Micro Asia." Now, this task ultimately falls to Homer, despite Homer's lack of religious faith. Homer does not even believe in Jesus, so much to the point that he thinks Jesus' name is actually "Jeebus." If you know this episode, you know that throughout, every time Homer gets into trouble he screams out, "SAVE ME JEEBUS!" So Homer lands on a secluded island with the task of Christianizing a whole group of indigenous people, and teaches them what he thinks the message of this "Jeebus" is. By the time he leaves, he builds a Casino, a liquor store, causes a natural disaster, and starts a war. All the while, he screams, "Save me Jeebus!"

Now, there is some comic relief here – this episode is hilarious, picking on the all-too-often notion of people (most often Christians) going around the world telling others about Jesus when they really know absolutely nothing about the guy, and then they royally mess things up, often preaching a different Gospel about a different person.

But let's not be mistaken today, Jeebus, however funny and light-hearted he is to talk about it - is real. We see the effects of it every day in our world. The worship of Jeebus is everywhere, in our schools, at our work, around our dinner tables, during Christmas, on the street corner, at the food pantry, and in our own Church. This Jeebus is not just something we follow when we fall short of following the actual Christ Jesus. It is a figure that stands apart from Jesus many people profess as the right and true savior.

Those three wise men, like us, were caught in between the Jeebus that Herod tells them about, and the Christ Jesus that they meet in the manger under the stars. They, too, were under the influence of some other vision of Jesus; that is, until they saw him. It was when they stood before him, silent, saying nothing, bringing gifts and submitting themselves to his presence that they became believers. And that is what I think this story can say to us today. Even the most dedicated and fervent followers of Jeebus can find Christ Jesus if they approach the manger with reverence and silence, and if they let the Bible speak to them in their own study and through a diverse community of other people and say as little as possible. Our faith is so fragile, and rightly so – we must accept the vulnerability that comes with a Christ who lived as a baby and died on a cross. We are one Facebook post, one political quote, one PBS pledge away from taking up our cross and following Jeebus.

Today our prayer has to be, "Save us . . . Jesus."

Gotcha Covered

How Well Are You Covered?

Mark Davis, NC State Grange Insurance Programs Coordinator

Over the last few months, my pathway crossed several different individuals who were planning for their "Golden Years." They were looking forward to their retirement, traveling, visiting children and grandchildren now living in different states, and being on their own schedule. Then there were things they were not looking forward to as well – getting old, feeble and the possibility of having to have someone else take care of them, and being on the doctor's schedule. They still wanted to be in charge, as we all would, so they were taking care of that possibility with some pre-planning should the possibility of care become a reality.

In the past, when there were large families, senior care was given at home where multi-generational families were under the same roof. We have a mobile society and smaller family units, so this option is vastly impossible to implement today.

So how are the needs met today? Generally, there are four stages of care for those who need assistance. The first stage, informal care, is given by either the spouse or another family member, which are unpaid, to assist with the normal activities of daily living. These include dressing, bathing, transferring, toileting, etc. As the need becomes greater, or there is no family member to assist, then there is the progression to the Adult Day Care Center. This allows the family the ability to continue to work and have the confidence that their loved one is being cared for. Both of these stages generally require mobility, assistance, and cooperation from the person needing the care.

As the physical/mental conditions continue to decline, a higher level of care/service is required. These typically occur in the home or at an assisted living center. Here you will find some level of "skilled care" or services such as physical therapy, or nursing care. The last stage, where very few want to go, is the skilled care nursing facility.

Now, in addition to having someone else provide care for us, it is going to cost! To further compound the issue, remember that the more care that is required, the more it is going to cost. So how are we going to pay for this escalating possibility? There are three ways: savings, an insurance policy, or government assistance.

When we look at savings, or being self-insured, that can amount to a small fortune if an extended amount of care is needed. If care is needed – which the probability of need increases dynamically as we age – those funds are channeled to the facility rather than being left for our families as part of our legacy.

When we explore being cared for by the government – that does not look much better as our options for care are limited to when and where government assistance is available. We also have to consider how one becomes eligible for government assistance by liquidating assets, or the "spend down" prior to getting government assistance. Hence again, we put our spouse or family in financial peril by using this method.

This leaves the insurance option. Historically, there was the long-term-care insurance policy. This policy provided funds on a daily or monthly basis to cover expenses for care provided in the home, adult day care, assisted living, or the skilled care facilities. There are many variations and forms of long-term-care insurance options now available. Examples include a single purpose long-term-care policy or a life (or annuity) policy with a long-term-care rider attached. There are even some "state partnership" programs where the amount of long-term-care coverage is actually exempted from the Medicaid spend-down amount.

If you would like to learn more about the long-term-care planning options, just give us a call and we will be delighted to work with you and your family's needs!

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